



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

Governor Janet Napolitano has said: “This place of exceptional beauty is not ours to own, it is only ours to care for, for the time that we are here.”

As many of you heard at our Governor’s Conference on Tourism last month, sustainability and growth issues are two major trends that directly impact our industry. Now more than ever, it is important for us to support the future development of Arizona while preserving the great outdoor adventures that attract so many of our valued visitors.

By next year, the Smart Growth Scorecard, established by the Governor’s Growth Cabinet, will be integrated into our program of work, including our grant programs. Smart Growth is a continuous planning process to guide the preservation, development, or redevelopment of a neighborhood, community, or region to promote the goals and ambitions of its residents. I encourage you to learn more about Smart Growth, and how you can successfully integrate this process into your community.

For more information on the Smart Growth initiative, please visit www.azcommerce.com/SmartGrowth/.

Have a great week.

Margie R. Emmert

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Coming Soon: Rural Tourism Development Grant Program for FY09!

The release of the Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for fiscal year 2009 is coming soon! RTDGP is a competitive grant program that provides matching funds for tourism-related economic development projects in rural communities throughout Arizona with the goal of strengthening the regional and local economies and expanding tourism development. All projects must be designed with these goals in mind.

This year centennial projects will be given priority for RTDGP funds. A detailed description of the criteria, projects must comply with to be considered a centennial project, will be included in the fiscal year 2009 guidelines. For information on the Arizona Centennial please contact Karen Churchard at kchurchard@azot.gov or call her at 602-364-4158.

For more information on the Rural Tourism Development Grant Program please contact Glenn Schlottman at gschlottman@azot.gov or visit www.azot.gov.

AOT Needs Calendar of Events

AOT is requesting information to be considered for the calendar of events posted at www.ArizonaGuide.com. The calendar is currently updated with events through November 2008, and will soon be adding 2009 information. Events to be considered must be open to the public and of interest to participants or spectators from neighboring communities across Arizona or from out of state. Submissions should include the date, including the year; community in which the event takes place, name of event; venue; venue address; description; admission price, event time; phone number and/or Web site for the public to obtain additional information. Please include your contact information so that we may reach you with any questions we may have prior to posting your event. Photography is encouraged, (images should be a minimum of 300 DPI at 4"x5" original size) and we can supply you with an image information form. Additional events through November 2008 may also be submitted immediately if the event is not posted. Please check the Web site to see if your event is already included. If you have questions or would like an event submission form, please contact Marjorie Magnusson at 602-364-3695, by fax at 602-364-3702 or via e-mail at Mmagnusson@azot.gov.

Industry News

Study: Search and Shopping Sites Having Major Influence on Travel

A new PhoCusWright study determined that search and shopping sites are having a major impact on the travel category. Also: their power is expected to grow as the slowing economy prompts travelers to spend even more time searching for travel deals. "This trend underlines the need for travel suppliers and intermediaries to target search marketing and online advertising efforts based on a clear understanding of online travel shopping patterns," says the research company. Just over half of the top 200 travel Web sites in February 2008 were booking sites. The remaining were

referral and media sites, which attract travel shoppers with expert and traveler-generated reviews, meta-search capabilities, and maps of travel destinations.

Other highlights of travel trends:

- While travelers continue to report shopping at an online travel agency site and then switching to a supplier site to book (and vice versa), online travel agencies and suppliers in fact lose more downstream traffic to competitors of the same type of site.
- Metasearch sites were initially hailed as a boon to suppliers, but online travel agencies are in fact the top beneficiaries of these sites.
- Despite the fact that two general social networks rank within the top 10 sites on the Web overall, only two travel-specific social networks appear within the top 200 travel Web sites.

The report also analyzes fast-growing travel Web sites based on increase in visits year over year, search engine traffic to the travel category, including search term patterns, and lifestyle descriptions for online travel shoppers. The report, called “Search, Shop, Buy: Inside The Tangled Web of Online Travel” is available for purchase online for U.S. \$500. (*Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter*)

Solo Travelers Finally Getting More Attention

Solo travelers, a large segment of the travel population (one third of the adult population travels solo) may finally be getting the attention they deserve, according to industry experts. This year, a quarter-million singles (42 and older) will spend more than \$28 billion on travel, according to an American Association of Retired People (AARP) survey. (*Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter*)

Social Networks Surge on Growing Global Audiences

[OnlineMediaDaily](#) reports that Facebook and other social networking sites are enjoying rapid growth worldwide, thanks to a surge in social media activity outside the U.S., especially in emerging regions. One notable exception is MySpace, which Facebook surpassed in April as the world's biggest social network. The News Corp. property has seen its traffic stagnate both domestically and globally in the last year. MySpace's flattening growth stems partly from a maturing market in North America, where social networking traffic grew only 9 percent for the year ending June 2008, according to comScore Media Metrix. Facebook's 38 percent North American growth even looks sluggish compared to its 153 percent jump worldwide, for a total of 132 million users as of June. But elsewhere, social networking is taking off. Consider traffic growth of 66 percent in the Middle East and Africa to 30.2 million, Europe increasing 35 percent to 165 million and Latin America rising 33 percent to 53.2 million.

Higher Fares, Few Passengers in the Skies

Fewer people are taking to the skies this summer amid higher airfares, new fees and a slowing economy that has many consumers cutting their vacation spending. The nation's seven largest airlines boarded 3.5 million fewer passengers during June and July, compared with the same period last year, a dip of about 4 percent. For some airlines, the drop was even steeper—U.S. Airways had 6 percent fewer passengers, or about 600,000 fewer people on its planes. American Airlines boarded about 580,000 fewer passengers in June and July, compared with last year. Travel demand is likely to drop off even more once the summer travel season ends. Most carriers are planning to cut their schedules after Labor Day to reduce expenses. The drop in passengers

could suggest that airlines are losing their ability to raise fares. (www.FortWorthStar-Telegram.com/Business)

Electronic System for VMP Travelers Now Accessible Via Web

The Electronic System for Travel Authorization is now accessible via the Internet for citizens and eligible nationals of Visa Waiver Program countries to apply for advance authorization to travel to the U.S. under the VWP. Effective Jan. 12, 2009, all VWP travelers will be required to obtain an electronic travel authorization prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the U.S. under the VWP. The EST will initially be available in English only. Other languages will follow. VWP countries include 27 friendly, mostly European, nations. (*Details at www.Tinet_Info@ita.doc.gov. (Special to TA)*)

Summer Driving Season Got Off to Slow Start

As the summer vacation season began, Americans got out of their cars, driving 12.2 billion fewer miles in June than in the same month a year ago. The 4.7 percent decline, which came while gas prices were peaking, was the biggest monthly driving drop in a downward trend that began in November, the Federal Highway Administration said Wednesday. "Clearly, more Americans chose to stay close to home in June than in previous years," said Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters.

Over all, Americans drove 53.2 billion fewer miles November through June than they did over the same eight-month period a year ago, according to the FHWA's latest monthly report on driving. That is a larger decline than the 49.3 billion fewer miles driven by Americans over the entire decade of the 1970s, a period of oil embargoes and gas lines, the agency said. Gas consumption was down, too. The FHWA said that motorists consumed 400 million fewer gallons of gasoline and 318 million fewer gallons of diesel fuel than in the same period in 2007. (*AP; Pages C10; New York Times; 3A, USA Today; 1C, Miami Herald; A2, Washington Post; www.LosAngelesTimes.com/Business*)